DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY F Schaefer DATE 7/2/85
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(S) AUTH. REASON(S)
E. DORSE EXISTING MARKINGS ☒
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PA or FOI EXEMPTIONS b6
EXCISE
(18)
UCM/MRP
5220 A
Shelton

October 31, 1977

Dear Senator Kennedy:

I refer to the letter your office transmitted from your constituent concerning, among other things, b6 the proposed sale of the F-15 to Saudi Arabia, the sale of arms to Egypt and AWACS to Iran.

Saudi Arabia has, in the judgment of this Administration, acted as a moderating force regarding Middle East peace efforts and on oil pricing and supply.

US-Saudi cooperation, based on mutual confidence, serves our broader concerns on issues of vital importance to peace and stability in the Middle East and to international economic welfare. A continuing US role in meeting the legitimate defense needs of Saudi Arabia is an integral part of that cooperation and hence acts to reduce the dangers of the sort raises in his letter to you. b6

Saudi Arabia is a vast country with the largest petroleum reserves in the world and one of the smallest military forces of any major country in the Middle East. Its entire military force structure is defensively, not offensively, oriented.

The Saudi Government, working closely with the United States for many years in developing its military defenses in a systematic fashion consistent with its sizable territory and limited manpower, has placed appropriate emphasis on developing a modern defensive air force. The F-15 would replace the aging British Lightnings and fulfill the same defensive air-to-air intercept mission the Lightning has for over 15 years. The Ford Administration agreed to sell the Saudis an advanced fighter; the Saudis, after a study of the various alternatives, chose to request the F-15. After

The Honorable
Edward M. Kennedy,
United States Senate.

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careful review of this question determined that a legitimate military requirement exists. We will proceed in our consideration of this matter at the appropriate time in close consultation with the Congress.

It should be noted that the Saudis have never engaged in armed conflict with Israel nor have they transferred U.S. military equipment to any of the confrontation states.

Egypt has, we believe, shown its good intentions by working for a negotiated settlement of the Arab-Israeli dispute based on the provisions of United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, which each Administration since 1967 has endorsed as basis for a settlement. The Government of Egypt has explicitly stated its willingness to conclude a peace agreement with Israel.

Iran works towards many goals which are in its national interest as well as our own. In so doing, its defensive strength is an important element to further the security and stability of its region. Specifically, Iran helps protect the security of the Persian Gulf, provides a balanced approach to Arab-Israeli problems and seeks to improve relations among its neighbors. The proposed sale of AWACS for Iran's air defense system would contribute to Iran's strength and, thus, to the achievement of these and other shared goals in the region.

This Administration has, as you know, adopted a policy of restraint in arms sales worldwide. This policy recognizes, at the same time, our need to assist our friends and allies in their legitimate defense needs. This includes Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Iran. This Administration has considered all of these arms sales in light of this arms transfer policy and our desire to work closely with Congress on all arms transfer questions.

Sincerely,

RF/GW

Douglas J. Bennet, Jr.
Assistant Secretary for
Congressional Relations

Enclosure:

Correspondence returned.

NEA/ARP:BKBodine/ezm Clearances: See attached blue
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